

August 25, 2015

Good Evening Senator Murphy, Ladies & Gentlemen,

My name is Raynetta Woods. I am a behavioral health clinician at Wilbur Cross SHC called the "Body Shop." I enjoy my work here and I feel like I make a huge difference in helping students with their behavioral health needs in an attempt to keep them in school and graduated. This work is my "calling," and I know it sounds a bit cliché', but once you understand my history you will also understand why I belong here, and why mental health services in school is so critically important.

I am a proud graduate of Wilbur Cross High, 1993. During my high school years I, the same as many other students today dealt with obstacles from my home-life that made it very difficult for me to focus on school. It was both convenient and critical that I got my mental health needs met at school. It kept me coming to school and it helped me manage the feelings attached to the trauma I faced when I left school.

My mental health needs were met by the SBHC clinician so many years ago!! We are still very good friends today!! She was an amazing support to me and helped guide me through my mental health trauma and healing. This resource was what helped keep me in school, graduated, and off to college to pursue my dreams. I can remember often telling her that I wanted to do what she does. I wanted to help adolescents like me get through some of the trauma they may face growing up in New Haven. She said that I could and I should have her job! Last year, when the opportunity was presented to come and work for WCHS Body Shop, I was thrilled!!

In the last year, I recognized some of the same issues that I encountered growing up as well as some new technology-driven problems that adolescents encounter these days. I worked with students dealing with stress, depression, self-esteem, and identity issues to name a few. Adolescent years are very difficult for the "normal" teenager. SHC's mental health services help students get through their teenage years in a healthy way. The SHC develops a more aware young adult in their future beyond high school. I know that is what the Body Shop had done for me; and I'd like to think that's what I do for the adolescents I serve. Mental health services are difficult for adolescents to navigate; they are often non-trusting of adults. Having this service in the SHC's make it easy to engage them. I appreciate you listening to my story and wish I could be here to connect with you all on this very important issue.

Best,

Raynetta Woods, LCSW